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In basing literary periods as much as possible on, and associating them with, political events, the author has not only diminished the task of the student by facilitating to him the general survey he must have of the literature of a language as a whole and the quick and sure discrimination he must be able to make of different periods, but he has also fostered his interest by pointing out the intimate relation that exists between the political and the literary life of a nation and the important bearing which these have upon each other.

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PRACTICAL FRENCH PHONETICS.

Fransk Læsebog efter Lydskriftmetoden af
OTTO JESPERSEN. København: Carl
Larsen. 1889. pp. ii, 145.

Expositions of the manner in which the phonetic method can be applied to the teaching of French and English have been given us by PAUL PASSY, MAX WALTER, A. RAMBEAU, H. KLINGHARDT and others, but here we have the first French Reader based solely and entirely on the principles advocated by Professor W. VIETOR in Germany, by the "Association fonétique des Professeurs de langues vivantes" in France, and by the "Quousque Tandem Association for the Reform of Language-teaching" in Scandinavia. There is no better way of giving the reader an idea of Mr. JESPERSEN'S book than by placing before him these principles as they have been formulated by the last named association:—(1.) Not the written language, but the real living, spoken language, is to be made the foundation of the instruction. In languages, therefore, in which the orthography differs much from the pronunciation, as in English and French, texts in a suitable phonetic transcription are to be used at the beginning.—(2.) The instruction ought to begin with connected texts, not with disconnected sentences.—(3.) The grammatical instruction is to be based on the reading . . . only later on in the course may a systematic grammar be used for review.—(4.) Translation from the one language into the other is to be restricted as much as possible.

Mr. JESPERSEN has constructed his Reader

strictly on these principles. It contains fifty-eight pages of purely phonetic text, followed by fourteen pages which serve to introduce the learner to the usual spelling by means of an interlinear phonetic transliteration, and by twenty pages of text in the usual spelling. Forty-three pages are devoted to notes and vocabularies, and the last seven pages to a short grammar of the spoken language. The grammar, as can be seen at a glance, is reduced to a minimum, and by comparing successively the different selections, all of which consist of poems and stories complete in themselves, one will find that they are so carefully graded, that with the aid of the vocabularies they can be understood quite easily without translation.

In his preface Mr. JESPERSEN promises to give later an exposition of the manner in which he thinks his Reader and Grammar should be used in teaching. No criticism of his method, therefore, can be attempted here. I cannot refrain, however, from expressing an objection to the somewhat extreme colloquialism of Mr. JESPERSEN'S phonetic representation of spoken French. *Il* and *sur*, for instance, always lose their *l* and *r* before a following consonant, the "liaison" is very often neglected, the *x* in *exprimer* and *expérience* are represented by *s*. All this is in advance of P. PASSY'S first edition of 'Le français parlé,' although I understand from a review in *Phonetische Studien* iii, p. 101, that the second edition is much more radical in this respect. Now, I perfectly recognize the scientific value of an exact representation of the ever-changing living language, and I do not by any means underestimate the practical value of such a representation for the scholar who wants to become familiar with every form of the language; but as to teaching this extreme colloquial form with all its tricks and devices to facilitate mere rapidity of utterance, why, it reminds one of SCHILLER'S

Wie er sich räuspert und wie er spuckt,
Das habt Ihr ihm glücklich abguckt.

Between the careless language of familiar intercourse and the elocutionist's pronunciation, which follows pedantically all the vagaries of the traditional orthography, there certainly exists a golden mean, which appears in the

speech of the educated when they pay attention to their pronunciation. And it is this average or medium form of the spoken language that I think should be taught in our schools. It is suited to the abilities of the beginner, who from a slow and careful enunciation can only gradually advance to that rapidity of utterance which is both the cause and the result of colloquial speech. This careful pronunciation is also best suited to the literary style of the reading-matter generally set before our learners. Of course, when the material is of such colloquial nature as that supplied in Mr. JESPERSEN's Reader, fault is to be found not so much with the phonetic transcription as with the selection itself. The advisability, namely, of introducing into the school-room tales, poems and rimes that properly belong in the nursery, seems to me very doubtful; and, unless Danish children, for whom the Reader is intended, are very different from American boys and girls, I am inclined to think that Mr. JESPERSEN has selected such simple material principally on account of its extreme colloquial character and because he believes in teaching the most familiar form of the spoken language from the very beginning. Another argument against this choice of reading-matter may or may not apply to Danish learners, but certainly the acknowledged slovenliness of the English articulation of our pupils needs to be counteracted from the very beginning by an insistence on the careful and neat articulation that characterizes the French language. For these reasons it seems to me that the pronunciation to be taught first is the pronunciation of the stage or pulpit rather than that of the nursery. A careful and slow pronunciation would be most natural to the beginner, and whatever might sound pedantic about it would gradually wear off by greater familiarity with the language. It would be easy enough also to teach the more colloquial forms of speech later on, when rapidity of utterance is more easily attained.

We should not take leave of Mr. JESPERSEN's book without casting a glance at the short grammar given in its concluding pages. To these the linguistic scholar will instinctively have turned first on taking the book in

hand, to see what advance the author's treatment of spoken French represents on KOSCHWITZ' 'Französische Formenlehre nach ihrem Lautstande.' The greatest difficulty in the way of a phonetic treatment of the French grammar is certainly the *liaison*, which causes silent final consonants to reappear under certain conditions. Mr. JESPERSEN begins his grammar by summing up the most important cases of *liaison* under these three heads: (1) *z* in the plural; (2) *z* in the first and second persons of verbs; (3) *t* in the third person of verbs. This expedient is excellent; it not only clears the way, but simplifies matters so much that it is possible, for instance, to give on two pages and a half the most important facts concerning the conjugation of the verbs. It is true that the subjunctive is entirely omitted, and only a few irregular verbs are mentioned; but it is hard to find in all grammatical literature two pages as suggestive as these. And what could at the same time be simpler than this? The infinitive ends either in *e*: *aple*, *dōne*, *ale*; or in *r*: *dormi:r*, *fini:r*, *prā:dr*, *savwa:r*, *æ:tr*. The present tense is inflected *z*, *ty*, *il apæl*, *nuz aplō*, *vuz aple*, *ilz apæl*; or *dɔ:r*, *dormō*, *dorme*, *dorm*. Like *apæl* is inflected *sæm*: *nu smō* and without syncope of the vowel: *dōn*, *nu dōnō*. *dɔ:r* has in the singular thrown off a consonant, which reappears in the plural; in the same way *fini*—*nu finisō*, *vu finise*, *il finis*.

In looking over the short chapter on the formation of the feminine of adjectives one will be equally struck by the novel aspect this phonetic treatment gives to French grammar. And is not this the true aspect? It is really astonishing how much our ideas of the French language have been distorted by treating it in the traditional manner as it appears on the page rather than as it sounds to the ear. The least important dialects spoken by savage South Sea islanders have fared better in this respect at the hands of the linguists than the cultivated language of the most cultured nation of Europe. Let us hope that before long an 'Elementarbuch des gesprochenen Französisch' will present to us a complete picture of the phonetic conditions of modern French!

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